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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHANGHAI 000259

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM AND DRL/IRF  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/8/2018  
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PTER KIRF CH VT TW  
SUBJECT: SHANGHAI BISHOP JIN ON CHINA-VATICAN RELATIONS, SHESHAN  
PILGRIMAGE

REF: 2007 SHANGHAI 806 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Beede, Political/Economic Section  
Chief, U.S. Consulate, Shanghai.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a July 7 meeting with Pol/Econ Section Chief and Poloffs, Shanghai Bishop Aloysius Luxin Jin continued to be pessimistic about prospects for normalization of relations between the Vatican and Beijing. He also confirmed that Beijing had taken measures to keep the annual pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of Sheshan small allegedly because of fears that the event could be a target for terrorists. Bishop Jin is slowly recovering from a cold that left him without a voice for two months, but he is in good spirits and showed mental acuity. End Summary.

Recovering From A Cold

¶2. (C) Pol/Econ Section Chief and Poloffs called on Shanghai Bishop Aloysius Luxin Jin on July 7 to check on his health and get his views on the Catholic Church in China. Bishop Jin has been unwell for the past few months and, according to his assistant, has been suffering from a cold that affected his throat. Speaking in a whisper, Bishop Jin said he was not able to speak for two months. Despite this he was feeling well enough to receive visitors in his private office.

No Normalization in the Near Term

¶3. (C) Bishop Jin remains pessimistic that the Vatican and Beijing can normalize relations in the near future. Beijing refuses to give up its control over the appointment of bishops, characterizing central authorities as "stupid." He said that in June 2008 the Vatican published a list of the bishops in China that are in communion with the Pope that showed that the majority of bishops in China are loyal to the Vatican. Only 10 mainland bishops are not on the list and, of those ten, the Vatican is considering recognizing four. Bishop Jin did not think that Taiwan is a major issue in Mainland-Vatican relations. Bishops in Taiwan are very close to the Taiwan authorities, but this issue will not prevent normalization which should eventually occur in the future, just not very soon.

¶4. (C) Bishop Jin believes that progress on normalization will be even slower after the Beijing Summer Olympics. For the past year, the Chinese Government has actively pursued normalization because of the pressure brought on by the Olympic games. Once the Beijing Games conclude, pressure will subside and normalization will likely take many years. Bishop Jin added that there will likely not be any normalization as long as State Administration for Religious Affairs Director Ye Xiaowen remains in power.

Marian Shrine Pilgrims Restricted

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¶5. (C) Bishop Jin confirmed that the Central Government placed restrictions on the number of pilgrims allowed to visit the Marian Shrine in Sheshan. Every May thousands of Catholics travel to Sheshan (a suburb of Shanghai) to visit the Marian Shrine and cathedral. In his June 2007 letter to Catholics in China, the Pope called on Catholics to pray at the Shrine on May ¶24. Bishop Jin said that last year in May there were more than 80,000 visitors to the shrine and that he was expecting 200,000 visitors this year. However, because of the restrictions there were less than 30,000 visitors this May. Since the March 2008 protests in Tibet, the Chinese Government has expressed concern that Beijing and Shanghai would be targeted for a terrorist attack. Therefore the Central Government wanted to keep the number of visitors to the shrine small to make the shrine a less attractive target for terrorists, said Bishop Jin. He also noted that the Pope's June 2007 letter to Chinese Catholics had played a role in Beijing's decision to keep the number of pilgrims small, but did not elaborate on this point.

Still Active

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¶6. (C) Although his voice was weak and he walked slowly into the meeting, the nonagenarian Bishop Jin still appears to be mentally active. He apparently follows the U.S. presidential election and expressed his disappointment that Senator Hillary Clinton had lost the Democratic nomination. Bishop Jin recalled that he sat next to the then First Lady when President Clinton visited Shanghai and was impressed by her strength and tenacity. He still holds out hope that there will be a female U.S. President in four years, while very interestedly watching to see which Presidential candidate will win this autumn's election.

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